

## **CONTEXT: IDENTITY AND BELONGING**

- The nature of identity and people's experiences of belonging to particular groups
- Perceptions of self at home compared with those of self at school
- Experiences of belonging or not belonging to particular groups
- Feelings of identity with a group or culture
- How individuals may be influenced by belonging to a group or culture
- Issues of national identity
- Online identities established by network users in online communities- Facebook etc

### **BELONGING:**

- **Relationships** : Family, friends, partner, teacher, associate
- **Social** : groups, classes, clubs, organisations, teams
- **Environment** : Australia, America, Melbourne , countryside, metropolitan, nature vs. man-made environments

### **IDENTITY:**

- **Career identity** : Lawyer, nurse, environmentalist, politician
- **Family identity** : Father, mother, older sister, nephew, cousin
- **Skills identity** : Athletic, intelligent, leader, listener
- **Cultural identity** : History, tradition, religion, gender, ethics
- **Social identity** : Peer group, clique, club, social class

## **THEMES IN THE MEMBER OF THE WEDDING**

### **ISOLATION/ LONELINESS**

Although Frankie is surrounded by people, she is still not saved from the loneliness of being 12 years-old.

Frankie feels acutely that she is missing out on life. The moths that bang against her window each night symbolise this sense of confinement:

'To me it is the irony of fate,' she said. 'The way they come here. Those moths could fly anywhere. Yet they keep hanging around the windows of this house.' (pp.19–20)

What is isolation? How is it exhibited in the novel?

List examples of isolation in the text- What does this isolation represent?

How do you know these are examples of isolation?

What does the isolation represent?

### **IDENTITY AND SELF**

Frankie is a tomboy, torn between childhood and adulthood.

EG: Name change – giving voice to her changing identity. Name change back to Frances. Is she coming to terms with herself as a maturing young woman who can determine her own identity within the parameters of social expectations?

Through Frankie, we can see that an individual's identity can change depending on how they perceive their position in the social hierarchy.

Our identities are often formed in response to changes occurring around us. In what ways does the wedding prompt Frankie to question her identity? Can an individual accept change more easily if they have others to offer guidance and support?

While Frankie never knew her mother, the death had a large impact on her family. How do you think being motherless has influenced Frankie's identity? Can a sense of feeling isolated sometimes prompt individuals to reach out to others?

List some examples of a character searching for identity.

Whose identity is changing in the novel?

Why is their identity being changed? Is it necessary?

Think about why it was necessary for Frankie to make the transition to F. Jasmin- What does it represent?

Think about instances where people question their identity. What helps to define identity?

### **CONNECTION**

The relationship between Frankie and Berenice. Frankie and John Henry. In comparison to her relationship with her father?

What does it mean to have a connection with someone?

How do people connect with each other/ disconnect with each other?

How does Frankie connect to people? Why does she feel disconnected?

How do Frankie and Berenice connect?

How do Frankie and John Henry connect? How do Frankie and Royal Quincy Addams connect?

### **ESCAPE:**

Physical/ emotional/ mental

Frankie escaping her real world situations/ running away from home.

Why do characters want to escape?

Does everyone want to escape for the same reasons?

What do you think the characters need in order to escape?

How do they ultimately escape?

Discuss the reasons that Frankie and the other identified characters choose their particular methods for escape. What things made the escape easy? What things complicated the escape?

### **FEAR:**

Frankie's adolescent fears- That she will grow to 9 feet tall. Later that she is a murderer.

Afraid of the dark.

Changes in herself- Growing up is very challenging - not an instant process. Frankie tries to transform her appearance and changes her name to F. Jasmine but her encounter with the soldier highlights how innocent she really is.

Afraid of her isolation.

Fear of rejection- Frankie's desperation to belong to a new group stems from her fear of being labelled an outsider – a fear that is heightened because everyone except her seems to belong somewhere. This intensifies her longing to fit in and leads her to imagine a solution to her loneliness.

### **BELONGING:**

Frankie is struggling with who she is, who she was as a child and who she will become- She is alienated and alone in the world. Typical adolescent crisis? Too young to help the war effort but too big to sleep with Papa anymore.

The outer side of the theme of identity- "She belonged to no club and was a member of nothing in the world."

Idea of: Who am I as an individual? Who am I in relation to others?

Frankie- Not included in the summer club with neighbourhood girls

Lacks a sense of family- Her family unit is her, Berenice and John Henry.

Her brother Jarvis and Janice- "the we of me"

Why is it important to Frankie to choose where she belongs? What value does she see in being a member of a chosen group?

Frankie imagines she will travel the world with Jarvis and Janice, but this proves a fantasy. What role do imaginary groups play in forming our identities?

In Jarvis and Janice, Frankie initially believes that she has found a group who will respect her individuality. They will make her feel as if she belongs but will not ask her to change.

### **JOURNEY OF GROWTH:**

Frankie's inner quest to grow/ develop. She is frustrated and impatient- waiting for something better. Symbolism of physical travel to the wedding.

Frankie is on an inner quest to grow and develop into a young adult. She is frustrated and restless, impatient waiting for something better.

The quest is often symbolized by a physical journey, such as travelling to the wedding.

At the wedding Frankie must really 'grow up' and feel the pain of her delusional belief that she would be able to tag along with the married couple.

Journeys of inner growth often feature loss, painful realizations as turning points.

John Henry's abrupt death symbolizes Frankie's transition into young adulthood and leaving her childhood behind.

### **INNOCENCE:**

Frankie's encounter with the soldier.

Her physical changes- puberty.

The death of John Henry.

What events in the novel, *The Member of the Wedding*, cause Frances to lose her innocence? How do these events connect her to other girls her age and make her a member of something? How does Frankie's innocence isolate her from the real world? How is Frankie's innocence diminished?